

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO WHITE HOUSE

S E C R E T STATE 308292

EXDIS DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS/CHEROKEE

FOLLOWING REPEAT TEL AVIV 11160 ACTIONSECSTATE INFO AMMAN
CAIRO DAMASCUS DEC 28

QUOTE S E C R E T TEL AVIV 11160

EXDIS TREAT AS NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY AND SAUNDERS FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PROG, PBOR, IS, JO, EG, US

SUBJECT: HUSSEIN ROLE IN WEST BANK/GAZA DIALOGUE

REF: STATE 307029

1. THERE IS NO QUESTION NOW THAT THE ISRAELIS WANT
HUSSEIN TO JOIN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS. BEGIN HAS
ASKED US BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY TO TRY TO PERSUADE
HIM, AND A MAJOR THEME OF OPPOSITON CRITICISM OF
BEGIN'S SELF-RULE PROPOSAL FOCUSES ON THE VAGUENESS OF
JORDAN'S POTENTIAL ROLE. THE ISRAELIS DON'T HAVE TO BE
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ENCOURAGED BY US TO OPEN A DIALOGUE WITH HUSSEIN. THEY
WILL JUMP AT THE SLIGHTEST HINT OF READINESS ON THE
JORDANIAN SIDE TO JOIN THE ISRAELI/EGYPTIAN TANGO. THE
PROBLEM IS RATHER ON THE EAST BANK OF THE JORDAN.

2. THE ISRAELIS ARE CERTAINLY NOT INSENSITIVE TO
HUSSEIN'S VERY REAL DILEMMA. DAYAN CONTINUES TO BE

CONVINCED THAT HUSSEIN WILL NOT RISK JOINING THE NEGOTIATIONS SO LONG AS HE IS NOT ASSURED HE WILL GET ALL OF HIS TERRITORY BACK. WEIZMAN TOLD ME LAST NIGHT, DECEMBER 27, THAT HE QUITE HONESTLY WOULD NOT JOIN IN IF HE WEREIN HUSSEIN'S SHOES, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME HE, LIKE DAYAN, BELIEVES IT IS ESSENTIAL TO NEGOTIATE SOME LINK WITH JORDAN AS A GUARANTEE THAT BEGIN'S SELF-RULE PLAN WILL NOT LEAD IRREVOCABLY TO AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE. BEGIN HAS CONFIRMED TO ME HIS READINESS AND INDEED HIS DESIRE TO NEGOTIATE WITH JORDAN OVER NOT ONLY THE CITIZENSHIP DIVISIONS OF HIS PROPOSALS BUT ALSO OTHER ASPECTS. IF JORDAN ENTERS THE RING, HUSSEIN WILL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO AFFECT MANY ASPECTS OF THE SELF-RULE SCHEME. BUT I SUPPOSE HIS DILEMMA WILL REMAIN; HE CANNOT HAVE ANY ASSURANCE OF REESTABLISHING THE STATUS QUO ANTI IN THE WEST BANK.

3. AFTER READING HERMAN EILTS' ACCOUNT OF SADAT'S REACTIONS TO THE ISMAILIA CONFERENCE, I CONFESS THAT I AM QUITE UNCLEAR AS TO HOW SADAT WANTS TO PLAY THE HUSSEIN ANGLE. HE SEEMS TO BE SAYING THAT IT MIGHT BE BETTER FOR THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE TO GO AHEAD AND THRASH AROUND ON THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM WITHOUT HUSSEIN FOR A WHILE, COUNTING ON US TO BRING SUFFICIENT PRESSURE ON THE ISRAELIS TO GET THEM TO ACCEPT PUBLICLY SELF-DETERMINATION AS THE BASIS FOR FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS. IF THIS IS HIS
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ASSUMPTION, I FEAR THAT IT IS LIKELY TO BE THE SOURCE OF CONSIDERABLE FRUSTRATION AND DISILLUSIONMENT. IN THE PRESENT STATE OF ISRAELI PUBLIC THINKING AND POLITICAL REACTION TO BEGIN'S PROPOSALS, IT WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR BEGIN TO GO MUCH FARTHER THAN HE HAS ALREADY GONE IN THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE. MOREOVER, FROM MY TALKS WITH HIM, I THINK IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO PERSUADE HIM TO SHIFT FROM THE PHRASE "SELF-RULE" TO THE PHRASE "SELF-DETERMINATION", NO MATTER HOW DESIRABLE THAT SHIFT MIGHT APPEAR. A MORE PROMISING PROPOSAL, I THINK, IS TO WORK ON THE FIVE-YEAR REVIEW CONCEPT TO TRANSFORM IT INTO A MORE CLEARLY STATED TEMPORARY, INTERIM ARRANGEMENT FOR THE NEW SELF-RULE REGIME. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT IT WOULD BE IN HUSSEIN'S INTERESTS AS WELL AS OURS FOR HIM TO BE IN A POSITION TO LEAD BEGIN DIRECTLY TO THIS OUTCOME.

4. AS TO THE QUESTION OF WHETHER WE SHOULD PRESS HUSSEIN INTO A BILATERAL DIALOGUE, OR TRY TO PROMOTE A THREE-WAY DIALOGUE WITH OURSELVES IN THE MIDDLE, I CONFESS NOT TO HAVE A FIRM OPINION. I CAN SEE GOOD ARGUMENTS ON BOTH SIDES. IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL TRY

HARD TO GET THIS INTO THE BILATERAL CHANNEL AS THEY HAVE DONE IN THE PAST. BUT IF THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT A THREE-WAY DIALOGUE IS THE ONLY WAY OF INVOLVING HUSSEIN, I FEEL SURE THEY WILL GRACEFULLY ACCEDE TO IT. I CAN SEE SOME ARGUMENTS FROM THE U.S. POINT OF VIEW IN NOT BEING IN THE MIDDLE ON THIS ONE IN THE NEXT STAGE IN TERMS OF OUR OWN RELATIONS WITH OTHER ARAB STATES. BUT THE IMPORTANCE OF INVOLVING HUSSEIN BEFORE THINGS GO ANY FURTHER DOWN THE BILATERAL TRACK BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT SEEMS TO ME TO OUTWEIGHT THE RISKS FOR US.

5. IT MAKES LITTLE SENSE TO APPROACH THE ISRAELIS FURTHER ON THIS UNTIL WE HAVE THINGS SORTED OUT WITH HUSSEIN. THE PROBLEM IS TO TRY TO CONVINCE HIM THAT
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FURTHER FENCE-SITTING IS LIKELY TO PRODUCE YET ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE MISSED OPPORTUNITIES WHICH LITTER THE LANDSCAPE OF PAST PEACEMAKING EFFORTS BETWEEN JORDAN AND ISRAEL. I HOPE THAT OUT OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S MEETINGS WITH HUSSEIN LATER THIS WEEK HE MIGHT COME TO THIS CONCLUSION ON HIS OWN, ACCEPTING TOM PICKERING'S POINT THAT IT IS A DECISION HE HAS TO MAKE AND SHOULD NOT BE PRESSURED TO MAKE BY THE UNITED STATES. IF HE DOES CONCLUDE ON THE BASIS OF HIS CONTACTS WITH SADAT AND WITH US THAT HE NEEDS TO JOIN IN SOME FORM, WE OUGHT THEN TO MOVE AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE THEN TO TRY TO HELP BOTH SIDES TO WORK OUT THE MODALITIES, EITHER BILATERAL OR TRILATERAL. THE FIRST APPROACH HERE SHOULD BE DIRECTLY TO BEGIN. LEWIS. UNQUOTE
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